

Cottenham Primary School

Lambs Lane, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8TA

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make sufficiently good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although teaching is improving, pupils in Key Stage 1 do not have frequent opportunities to read challenging texts. Across the school, opportunities for pupils to write at length are limited.
- Some teachers do not use information about pupils' progress consistently well enough to match learning activities to their abilities. Consequently, some of the most and least able pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Sometimes, teachers' expectations for the quantity, quality and presentation of pupils' work are not sufficiently high.
- Some teachers do not ask searching questions to assess pupils' progress and identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Good initiatives are in place to improve the support available, and raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs. However, these actions are at an early a stage and it is too soon to see their full impact.
- Leaders have high aspirations and they are ambitious for pupils to do well, but they have not yet established a culture of high expectations right across the school.
- Subject leaders do not participate fully in observing teaching and learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to help identify and tackle areas for improvement.
- Governors have not made leaders sufficiently accountable for pupils' performance, or for checking that support for all groups of pupils is fully effective.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years grow in confidence due to the good care they receive. Stimulating teaching ensures that they learn more rapidly than the older pupils do.
- A rich programme of educational visits, residential trips, pre-school activities, development of the school garden and participation in sporting competitions support classroom teaching well.
- Pupils are courteous, polite and friendly. They wear their uniform with pride and are tolerant of cultural differences. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and pupils feel safe in the school.
- The school's work to engage hard-to-reach communities is effective. Parents are supportive of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 26 lessons. Nine of these observations were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed breaks and lunchtimes, and attended assembly and registration.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors, the headteacher and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 167 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and correspondence from parents. They also took account of 29 responses to staff questionnaires.
- A wide range of documents were examined including samples of pupils' work, information about pupils' progress, the school's development plan and self-evaluation summary, records of any poor behaviour, records of governors' meetings and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and observed reading support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Nick Rudman	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportions of minority ethnic pupils are above average. A growing local community of Travellers of Irish Heritage provides approximately 10% of the pupils.
- An average proportion of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A physical education consultant from Comberton Village College works in the school for one day each week.
- Children attend the early years provision full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the most able, by:
 - ensuring that pupils are consistently challenged in reading in Key Stage 1
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in all age groups
 - using the information about pupils' attainment and progress effectively, to plan and provide learning activities with clear objectives and outcomes that are closely matched to pupils' abilities
 - setting high expectations for the quantity, quality and presentation of pupils' work
 - helping teachers to develop questioning techniques that are effective in assessing pupils' learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - fully involving subject leaders in checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - ensuring that leaders and governors fully evaluate the effectiveness of support provided for pupils who need extra help with their learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not checked the quality of teaching and pupils' progress robustly enough to raise standards. Although pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are improving, leaders have not yet done enough to ensure that good teaching is typical and pupils make good progress across all subjects.
- Leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of the actions taken to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so it is unclear which strategies are proving most successful or provide the best value for money. The pupil premium funding supports disadvantaged pupils' academic learning and personal and social development. Pupils have good access to the arts, music, sport, educational visits, one-to-one tuition and small group support in literacy and numeracy.
- Middle leaders responsible for literacy and numeracy are not fully involved in the systematic checking of the quality of teaching and learning. While they participate in checking pupils' progress and the quality of their work, they are not involved in lesson observations. Consequently, teachers do not benefit from their advice.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers have sufficiently high expectations for pupils. Some pupils do not present their work neatly or complete sufficient work.
- Leaders check pupils' work but this is not rigorous enough to identify that some teachers do not use the information they collect about pupils to match learning closely to abilities.
- The school's self-evaluation is too generous. Performance targets set for staff are linked appropriately to pupils' achievement and the school improvement goals outlined in the school development plan.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils enjoy a wide range of creative arts, physical, technical, cultural, mathematical and linguistic opportunities. Their education is further enriched through educational visits, assemblies, e-safety, visiting speakers, pre-school clubs and personal, social and health education. Pupils understand the value of rules and the consequences of not keeping them. Participation in school council discussions introduces pupils to democracy. Pupils develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, and they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils from diverse backgrounds are welcome in the school. Leaders treat everyone with respect. Leaders are effective in improving behaviour and attitudes to learning due to robust systems and procedures. Leaders 'go the extra mile' to establish good relationships with hard-to-reach communities, which results in significant improvement in attendance and punctuality for many pupils. Incidents of fixed-term exclusions, as well as instances of bullying and other forms of discrimination, are reducing and this is creating a positive culture for learning in the school.
- Leaders have begun to address the inequalities in outcomes for different groups of pupils in order to ensure equal opportunities for all. However, progress is slow.
- The sport premium funding supports improvements to the quality of physical education teaching. A well-qualified physical education teacher from Comberton Village College works with teachers to plan learning and teaches all aspects of the physical education curriculum alongside school staff. This is improving teachers' knowledge, confidence and skills. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and participation in inter-school competition is increasing.
- The local authority provides a good amount of support for the school. Its consultants work with literacy and numeracy leaders and senior leaders to improve teaching and strengthen leadership and management.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is effective and meet statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding practices and procedures.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is not sufficiently effective. Although governors are well informed about many aspects of the school's work they have not held senior leaders to account, with sufficient rigour, for the achievement of all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Governors are skilled and come from a variety of backgrounds. They are passionate and persuasive, visiting the school often to keep up to date with developments. The headteacher presents information about pupils' progress and behaviour to governors on a regular basis. Governors use their training in data analysis to check the information. They recognise that some groups do not perform well and support is provided for them. However, they do not know which strategies provide value for money.
- Governors understand that good teaching is essential in securing high standards for pupils. Governors receive information on the quality of teaching and use this to tackle underperformance. They manage the headteacher's performance closely and use the headteacher's targets to set the performance goals for other staff. Pay rises or promotions for teachers are linked appropriately to pupils' progress and good teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and participate keenly in lessons. They show good consideration for the feelings of others and are tolerant of diversity, respecting racial, cultural and religious differences well. Pupils are courteous and do not hesitate to ask, 'How are you?' or hold doors open to allow others to pass through.
- Where teachers have high expectations, pupils work hard, listen politely to each other, take turns to contribute answers to teachers' questions, and produce high quality work. Even where expectations are not so high, disruptions to learning in lessons are rare.
- Adults show high levels of care for pupils. They use praise well to reward and motivate achievement. Pupils are positive and proud to receive awards in assemblies for good attendance effort and work
- Pupils make positive contributions to school life. Playground leaders help to involve pupils in play at break and lunchtimes. Classroom monitors and school council members take their roles seriously. Leaders have involved pupils in the design for the new building.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are keen learners and attend regularly. Attendance is average and improving for all groups of pupils. The school works well with parents, including those who are traditionally hard to reach, to promote good attendance. The pupil premium funding supports the improving attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school works effectively with external agencies to support disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs. Parents and pupils are included in discussions to set targets and agree action plans. Many pupils with challenging behaviour learn to manage their own behaviour successfully.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders provide training in child protection and first aid. As a result, all adults are vigilant. Leaders work closely with external agencies and record keeping is accurate and robust. Regular contact with parents, and the effective work of the travellers' worker, ensures open channels of communication and this contributes to pupils' safety and well-being.
- Adults help pupils to understand and assess the level of risk involved in different situations, such as when they are close to roads and railways, what to do in cases of fire emergency, or when they meet strangers in the community, and how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe in the school. They say that there is some unpleasantness in the form of

name-calling but they are confident that teachers will deal quickly with this and any other forms of bullying when reported. Any rare incidents of a racist nature are resolved quickly. The school works hard to fulfil its aim that 'every child is an integral part of the school community and shares its values'.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of the quantity, quality and presentation of pupils' work. Sometimes, learning is not sharply focused on clear outcomes, which results in uncertainty and slows progress for pupils.
- The information the teachers collect about pupils' progress is not always used effectively to plan learning activities that match pupils' abilities closely. Consequently, some of the most able pupils are not always challenged to reach their potential, and the least able pupils do not make good progress because work is not set at the right level.
- Some teachers do not ask questions effectively to assess pupils' learning in class. They do not probe pupils' understanding or encourage them to reflect often enough. As a result, gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding go unnoticed. Over time, these pupils fall behind their classmates if follow-up lessons do not address any misunderstanding and their progress slows.
- Teachers check pupils' progress regularly to identify those who are not progressing in line with expectations. Teachers plan effective support in small group and one-to-one sessions, which help pupils close gaps in their learning. In mathematics, these sessions are beginning to help pupils make faster progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together to plan small-group support and one-to-one tuition for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. As a result, they are beginning to show better progress in their learning in mathematics, but like other pupils, their progress in other subjects is slower.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are not taught consistently well across all year groups. Outcomes in mathematics are better than in reading and writing. Pupils' opportunities to write at length and practise writing skills or to read a wide range of genres are limited. The most able pupils do not have sufficient challenge in their reading to develop a rich vocabulary that they can draw on when writing. This slightly limits their ability to reach higher levels of attainment.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils join the school with attainment that is typical for their age. In 2014, they left Year 6 with above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, but many did not make the level of progress expected nationally. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching slow progress for all groups of pupils and limit their attainment.
- Outcomes for some of the most able pupils were not high enough in 2014. Fewer of the most able boys than nationally reached the higher standards in reading and mathematics, and fewer of the most able girls reached the higher standards in writing. Over time, their progress in reading and writing is not as good as that of other pupils and requires improvement.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 is on course to be well above average. However, improvements in writing are slower than in reading and mathematics.
- In 2014, although average proportions of Year 6 pupils made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, fewer pupils than expected made good progress. Significant groups including boys, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able did not make good progress. The school is now supporting pupils' progress through mathematics master classes, small group booster sessions and one-to-one tuition. As a result, the school's current data show that the proportions making good progress in 2015 are on track to be above the 2014 national figures.

- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding has not been as high as that of other students. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were more than two years behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. They were nearly two years behind other pupils nationally. Additional support is now helping these pupils to close gaps in their knowledge in mathematics but progress in reading and writing is slower.
- A number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did not make good progress in 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics. Although support is helping them to make better progress this year, improvements are not rapid because teachers do not always assess learning in the classroom carefully to inform future planning and close gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The progress of travellers of Irish heritage and other minority ethnic groups is similar to that of other pupils and requires improvement.

The early years provision

is good

- The achievement of children in the early years is good. They make better progress than pupils in the older age groups because they are taught consistently well and enjoy a range of stimulating activities that are matched closely to their ability levels.
- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Adults have a good understanding of how children learn. They use the internal and external spaces to support learning in all areas of the early years' curriculum. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is above the national average. They are prepared well for entry to Year 1.
- Learning activities are stimulating and engaging and appeal to children's natural curiosity. Children are keen learners, clearly enjoy their learning experiences and work hard. During the inspection, a small group, working under the direction of their teacher, used their senses to explore a variety of unusual fruit made available to them. Children's descriptive language improved and they applied phonics well to writing.
- Behaviour is good. Adults provide a high level of care for children. As a result, children grow in personal confidence and social skills. Routines are established from the early days in the Reception class. Children are polite, courteous and friendly. They listen carefully, have good attitudes to learning and follow instructions quickly. Children are keen to participate in school life, take their roles as class monitors seriously and play sensibly. They enjoy coming to school. When asked why, children enthusiastically replied 'because we love to learn'. Attendance is good.
- Leadership is good. Links with pre-school providers are effective. Well-considered induction processes allow children to spend short days in the Reception class prior to starting school. Consequently, children settle quickly. Daily contact with parents allows for an effective flow of information about children. Parents say they feel well supported with home learning through the sessions on phonics that the school provides. Leaders establish effective partnerships with parents and external agencies that help to support children's good progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110604
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	456026

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	603
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Duckworth
Headteacher	James Kilsby
Date of previous school inspection	31 May–1 June 2012
Telephone number	01954 250227
Fax number	01954 273321
Email address	office@cottenham.cambs.sch.uk

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